

**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Rehabilitation Council
Comfort Suites Inn
10601 Telegraph Road
Glen Allen, Virginia
Approved Minutes, Quarterly Meeting
March 12, 2011**

Members Present: William Alley, Marguerite Bardone (abstained from participating in the meeting until further notice from the Governor regarding her reappointment), Melanie Brunson, Richard Gonzalez, Claudie Grant, Richard Holley, Martha Macias, and Doug Powell

Members Absent: Benjamin Franklin, Angela Matney, Debbie Pfeiffer, Sherrie Phillips

Staff Present: Ray Hopkins, Commissioner; Bob Burton, Deputy Commissioner for Services; Joan Carneal, Support Staff; Susan Payne, VR Program Director

Guests Present: Rachael Abbott, Current Consumer with DBVI; Faye Adams, Driver; Pam Holley, Driver; Ken Jessup, SILC; Martha Macias' Driver

Call to Order: Doug Powell called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. Members introduced themselves and stated which category they represented on the Council.

Adoption of Agenda: Doug Powell called for a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. It was moved by Melanie Brunson, seconded by Claudie Grant, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the agenda be adopted as amended adding the report on the SRC Retreat.

Action on Minutes of the Previous Meeting: Doug Powell called for a motion to approve the December 11, 2010, minutes. A motion was made by Rick Gonzalez, seconded by Bill Alley, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the minutes be adopted as distributed.

There were concerns raised as to voting rights of several members for the following reasons: 1) two members that were appointed to the DBVI SRC by the Governor to represent specific seats (PEATC and the Workforce Council) were no longer with the organization that they were appointed to represent but their term does not end until September 30, 2012; 2) one member's term expired on September 30, 2010, and has not been reappointed by the Governor; and 3) one member was appointed by the SILC to represent them since the member representing them on the DBVI SRC was not reappointed to the SILC and the Governor has not appointed this member officially to take over that unexpired term. SILC has contacted the past DBVI SRC member and requested him to send a resignation letter to the Governor as he did not qualify to serve on the DBVI SRC as their representative any longer. There needs to be clarification as to whether the appointed term outweighs the seat for which a member was appointed, and if the appointment letter from the Governor states that they are appointed specifically for that seat only.

Ms. Payne and Commissioner Hopkins have been in communication with the Office of the Secretary over the last several months. The Governor has been conducting a study regarding Boards and Councils in the Commonwealth and it is clear in the federal regulations that the General agency (DRS) and the Blind agency (DBVI) are mandated to have a separate SRC for each.

Chair Powell had addressed the issue of the accessibility problems of submitting online applications to the Office of the Secretary. The Secretary Office spoke with Commissioner Hopkins and agreed to accept applications by mail or email. However, it seems that appointments are only being reviewed by the online application process.

Rick Gonzalez moved that the Council empower Chair Doug Powell to contact the Office of the Secretary and follow-up on these appointments and address the issue that the Council's charge to conduct mandated business for the Commonwealth is being jeopardized due to lack of appointments. He should alert them of the many vacancies and that we are very short staffed. Rick Holley amended that motion to include the critical issue of timely appointments being made each year. It was passed by unanimous vote. Commissioner Hopkins will also address the issue with the Office of the Secretary as to whether appointed terms outweigh the seat in which a member was appointed.

Comments from the Public: Faye Adams stated that she hoped that VOPA would select a staff member to serve on the SRC very soon especially with the lack of new appointments for 2011. She stated that she enjoyed working with the SRC for so many years and wished the Council the best in their future projects.

Commissioner's Report – Ray Hopkins

Thanked Ms. Adams for serving on the SRC and the Commonwealth and wished her the best of luck in her retirement.

Budget Updates

We were in the Governor's budget for an increase in the amount of \$1.0 million dollars for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. However, this did not pass in the General Assembly, and we received level funding. There was one slight adjustment of \$120,000 that was added to DBVI's budget transferred from the Secretary of Education to support radio reading services in Virginia. This is not new funding but it will be handled through DBVI instead of the Secretary of Education. DBVI has adequate federal funds to serve all categories at this time and we do not anticipate having to go on an order of selection in Federal Fiscal Year 2012. DRS went on an order of selection effective March 1, 2011.

VRCBVI Renovations

Commissioner Hopkins discussed construction projects on campus and stated that individuals visiting the complex would see a lot of activity around the area. However, students and staff have been housed in the Library and Resource Center, dormitory, gymnasium, and headquarters building.

RSA Monitoring Report Status

We received the draft report the first of January. Responses are written as an appendix. It will be made public sometime next week on the DRS website. DBVI agrees with the recommendations

made by RSA. Some of the issues were with the Rehab Center's utilization, minority, and underserved populations. DBVI will be working with TACE to achieve these goals. Marketing issues were also addressed. VR corrective actions required subsequent to the RSA Monitoring Report included ensuring that IPEs are not being used as plans for extended evaluation and trial work; ceasing the use of stipends for unpaid work experiences; and the need to obtain consumer signatures for substantial amendments to consumer's IPEs. DBVI will provide guidance to DBVI field offices on these issues. DBVI is making an effort to find a way to fund wages for summer work experiences for students since earning wages is a very good incentive for the students to participate in the Summer Work Program.

Commissioner Hopkins welcomed Ken Jessup to the SRC as the new SILC representative.

Update on Regional Offices and VRCBVI – Bob Burton

The Bristol regional office is recruiting for a vocational rehabilitation counselor. A retired VR counselor has expressed an interest in serving on a part-time basis during the recruitment process.

The Roanoke regional office is recruiting for a rehabilitation teacher and orientation and mobility specialist. Another rehabilitation teacher is going out on maternity leave soon, but a retired rehabilitation teacher is willing to work part-time to fill that position during her absence.

The Staunton and Norfolk regional offices are stable with no changes since the last quarterly report.

The Richmond regional office is recruiting for an orientation and mobility specialist.

The Rehab Center has a new orientation and mobility specialist, Ray Bowie, from Las Vegas, Nevada. They are recruiting for two orientation and mobility specialists and one vocational counselor/evaluator position. There is a contracted part-time orientation and mobility specialist filling in until those positions have been filled.

The DBVI Board has approved a Pilot Program to hire six part-time job development and placement specialists with an approved 1,250 hours per year to assist the VR counselors. The Pilot Program is funded with \$150,000, and it has been approved by the Secretary to establish these positions. DRS has had similar positions in place for a long time, and it is good now to have these specialists available for DBVI consumers.

Standards and Indicators Quarterly Report 10/01/2010 – 12/31/2010

- Total closed cases for this reporting period is 22. Up from 18 last year.
- Of the closed cases that received services, the percentage with an employment outcome is currently at 49%. The federal minimum standard is 68.9%.
- Of the closed cases with an employment outcome, the percentage that have a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage, we are at 91%. The federal minimum standard is 35.4%.
- Of the closed cases with an employment outcome, the percentage that have a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage and have significant disabilities, we are at 100%. The federal minimum standard is 89 %.

- Ratio of average state wages to the average wage of closed cases with employment outcome that have wages greater than or equal to minimum wage, we are at 0.87%. The federal minimum standard is 0.59%.
- Difference between the percentage of closed cases with employment outcomes that have a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage that are self support at application and the percentage of closed cases with employment outcomes that have a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage that are self support at closure, we are at 45%. The federal minimum standard is 30.4%.
- There were 29 closures in January 2010 with an hourly wage at closure of \$15.14. In January 2011, there were 37 successful closures with an hourly wage at closure of \$16.89.
- Upon request, Bob Burton will review the process for sending out DBVI job announcements to consumer organizations.
- Rick Holley expressed a concern that the restrooms in the cafeteria did not have Braille labels. That issue will be addressed by the agency.

Update on VRCBVI Renovations

The construction on the AA building began the first of February. The interior of the building has been completely demolished. Since construction is inside, the contractor stated that staff should be back in to the building by next February. The roof of the AA building, cafeteria, and recreation building will be replaced as well.

DBVI was able to utilize space on campus to house all classes and staff.

VR Program Update – Susan Payne

Bi-Annual Report on Consumer Satisfaction

The semi-annual report for consumer satisfaction was completed in February, and we will send this report to SRC members the first of next week. Susan Payne reviewed the survey with members since it is research-based data. She discussed overall responses and members found it very impressive that the agency received a 53.5% response rate. She also discussed key concerns identified in the report. She encouraged members to contact her with questions once they received the report.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Surveys

Surveys have been mailed to consumers, employers, and stakeholders as part of the comprehensive needs assessment project. Catherine Burzio and Claudie Grant requested that the survey sent to the SRC be resent to them at their new email address.

2012 State Plan Development

The State Plan is due to RSA by July 1, 2011. Susan Payne stated that this was a very time consuming project. She stated that the lack of appointments would certainly be noticed with this particular project since it is a partnership activity between the SRC and DBVI. The Council agreed that there needs to be urgent communication with designated entities for selection of participants to serve on the DBVI SRC to alert them that we are out of compliance with mandated federal regulations.

DBVI is required to review all attachments annually but are required to submit updates for the following attachments: 1) 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; 2) 4.11(b) Annual Estimates; 3) 4.11(c)(4) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds; and 4) 4.11(e) Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities.

This is a project that is partnership oriented between the agency and SRC members. Copies of last year's State plan will be sent to members to review.

Chair Doug Powell gave a brief history of what the State plan represented for the agency.

VR on VR Outcomes – 10/1/2011 to 12/31/2010

There were 22 individuals who achieved employment outcomes during the first quarter of FFY 2011. Thirteen of those individuals are working more than 35 hours weekly. The average hourly wage at application was \$8.84 with the average week earnings at \$298.06. The average hourly wage at closure was \$16.44 with the average weekly earnings being \$555.56. The average age of individuals who went to work was 44. The average hours worked per week at closure was 31. Of the 22 individuals who accomplished their employment goal, 18 went to work in competitive settings; two were self-employed; one was a homemaker; and one was a licensed vendor through the Business Enterprise Program. The average cost of services to individuals who achieved their employment goal was \$13,867.29.

Public Meeting Updates

There were four public meeting held in the fall of last year. There is one additional meeting in conjunction with DRS scheduled to be held in Norfolk at the 2011 Transition Forum on March 14 from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. It will be held at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott, 235 E. Main Street. All members in that area are encouraged to attend if possible. Catherine Burzio stated that she would be participating in the March 14 public meeting.

Success Stories

Martha Macias stated that she has recently had four very successful cases: 1) one lady had a low vision exam because she could not read text. She received specific lenses from the low vision services and has been able to retain her job; 2) a customer service representative at Farm Fresh needed a Zoomtext in order to retain their employment; 3) a gentleman with diabetes working as an assistant manager at a base was on medical leave. We worked with him to maintain his job, had vision impairments which we helped solve, and it was so impressive to what determination he had to continue his employment; 4) another consumer had just lost her father, was all alone with a language barrier, and wanted to become an accountant. Martha contacted her mother, who spoke the language, and counseled her on loss of loved ones. The mother also spoke to her son who is an accountant, and he has become a mentor for this consumer. She is on her way to success.

Update from the Chair Doug Powell

Pilot Mentoring Program – Doug Powell

Rich Sorey, Norfolk regional manager, contacted Chair Doug Powell and stated that it was still difficult to get mentees interested. However, the Norfolk regional office is partnering consumers on

a short-term basis. Mentees are not willing to commit to a one-year obligation. Martha Macias is also matching consumers with similar backgrounds to mentor one another. Construction workers are forming a small mentor group from this activity. The Council requested that Martha Macias start documenting cases with mentoring activity for future reports to the SRC.

Results of Retreat

TACE gave a presentation in the morning regarding three basic questions: What is your role and why are we here? - How do you fit in? - and How do we get there? As a result of the retreat, a recommendation to approve the following structure for reporting information to the SRC is as follows:

Tier one: The full membership of the SRC. Tier two: The Executive Committee consisting of the current chair, the chair-elect, and a member-at-large the first year with the past-chair in subsequent years. Tier three: four workgroups consisting of: 1) Outreach – public outreach which includes liaisons to other organizations, media outreach, education of legislators, and public meetings; 2) State Plan – CSNA, consumer satisfaction, and public meetings (all mandated functions); 3) Annual Report (mandated functions); and 4) Membership development. The workgroups will meet and report to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will give a summary report to the SRC at each quarterly meeting.

Motion: Catherine Burzio made a motion that the SRC approve the structure of the establishment of an Executive Committee with four separate workgroups. The workgroups will meet and submit a report to the Executive Committee who in turn will give a summary report to the full SRC at the quarterly meeting. Reports will be sent to SRC members prior to the meeting so that members are prepared to address concerns/questions at the meeting. Rick Gonzalez seconded, and it was passed by unanimous vote. Joan Carneal will send the SRC profile to members to review and make recommendations for seats to serve on the Executive Committee the first year. After the first year, the Executive Committee will consist of the current chair, chair-elect, and the past-chair or a member-at-large.

Joan Carneal/Susan Payne will send an email on behalf of Chair Doug Powell to receive nominations and results will be shared with the SRC prior to the June meeting. A vote will be taken at that meeting to select members of the Executive Committee.

State Plan Writing Workgroup

Marguerite Bardone, Melanie Brunson, Catherine Burzio, and Doug Powell volunteered to serve on this workgroup. Last year's State Plan will be forwarded to all members for their review.

Subcommittee Reports:

Transportation – No report this meeting.

Transition

Training was provided to 18 teachers of the blind and vision impaired (TBVI) to train others in their school division to increase self-determination skills of their students who are blind or visually

impaired using the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE's) "I'm Determined" project (see www.imdetermined.com). Teachers are trained on how to help students develop their own IEP (Individual Education Programs) goals and lead their IEP meetings. (See DVD of a blind student from Virginia School for the Deafblind (VSDB) leading his IEP meeting using a power point and narrating from the Braille script that he prepared prior to the meeting.) Self-determination is one skill emphasized in the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). The skills developed will help students become better able to make others in post-secondary programs and in future jobs more aware of their strengths, needs, and accommodations that work best for them. A Roundtable discussion session on "Student Led IEPs" was also presented last week by Carol Wiegler at the AER conference.

Debbie Pfeiffer has provided an orientation to the new "Guidelines for Working with Students Who are Blind or Visually Impaired in Virginia Public Schools" to directors of Special Education in Superintendent's Regions I, II, III, IV, V, and VIII. She will present in Region VI next week and have spoken with Region VII to schedule. More than 100 special education directors have attended the trainings, and they have been very receptive to the Guidelines, including the emphasis on the Expanded Core Curriculum. She has also provided Guidelines training to more than 120 TBVI and O&M specialists in seven of the eight Superintendents' Regions. The 400 copies of the Guidelines have now been disseminated; Guidelines are no longer available in print, but can be downloaded from the VDOE website at www.doe.virginia.gov (search the VDOE website for "guidelines and blind" or contact Debbie Pfeiffer if you need them in Word format.)

Debbie Pfeiffer has presented a brief session at each of the regional TBVI meetings (mentioned above) on the importance of providing appropriate Part C services to families of children who are blind or visually impaired. Part C of IDEA refers to services to infants and toddlers, ages birth to three years old and their families. She has been encouraging TBVI and O&M specialists to complete the four online modules necessary to become providers of Part C services, and then to contact their local Part C agency directors to let them know that they are available to be contracted to work with families of blind/visually impaired infants and toddlers. Twenty-two TBVIs and four O&M specialists have completed the online modules. A Roundtable session regarding Part C services was also presented by Lisa Auwarter, DBVI education coordinator, at the AER Conference last week. It's really important that people providing services to families of infants and toddlers have knowledge of blindness/visual impairments and have a broad perspective that comes from having blindness/vision impairments or from working with individuals who are blind/vision impaired of all ages. She believes that advocacy and preparation for transition and positive educational and employment outcomes starts at birth.

VDOE continues to fund training of one cohort each year in "intervenor" type strategies for working with students who are deafblind. Each cohort consists of five pairs of teacher aides. Courses are offered through Utah State University and the Virginia Project for Children and Young Adults with Deafblindness recruits cohort members and supports them during coursework. After cohort members complete course work, Deafblind Project staff conduct on-site visits to check competencies developed in classes. We are in the third cohort now. Additional trainings for professionals and parents were also conducted.

The Board of Education will make a final decision on Braille proficiency assessment for TBVI at the March 24 meeting (see www.doe.virginia.gov and search VDOE for “Board of Education” go into minutes from the last (Feb) meeting.) NFB and DBVI staff members, as well as many Virginia TBVIs, have been involved in the selection of an appropriate assessment and establishment of cut-off scores.

Coordination with DRS SRC – Danny DeBoer and Doug Powell

Chair Doug Powell attended the DRS SRC January meeting. He gave a presentation at that meeting on the differences between DBVI and DRS SRCs’ structure. He discussed DRS having to go on an order of selection. Please refer to the DRS website at www.va-src.org for more details.

Other Business

Chair Doug Powell encouraged all members to volunteer for at least one workgroup for which they feel they have a passion and feel they can make a contribution. He requested that members send Joan Carneal an email expressing their interest in being the member-at-large on the Executive Committee.

On behalf of Chair Doug Powell, Susan Payne and Joan Carneal will send out an email to members to slate names for perspective officers for the Executive Committee by April 1. The slate of names will be shared with members prior to the June meeting where a vote will be held to appoint that Committee.

Adjournment: There being no other business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m. The next regular quarterly meeting will be held at the Comfort Suites Inn Conference Room on the first floor, 10601 Telegraph Road, Glen Allen, Virginia 23059; phone 804.262.2000, on Saturday, June 11, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.